

THE QUAKERS IN SAN JOSE

A Paper read by Herbert C. Jones at Semi-Annual Meeting
College Park Association of Friends
November 5, 1949

In this period of centennial celebrations, attention has been focused on historical events of various kinds. Included among these have been the historical beginnings of the various churches of San Jose.

In the Spanish Mission era the only religious activity was that conducted by the Jesuit and Franciscan Fathers. It is only natural, therefore, that the first church founded in San Jose should be a Catholic Church, namely, St. Joseph, which was established July 12, 1803.

The following dates indicate the establishment of other churches in San Jose during the 1840's, 50's and 60's:

- 1849 - First Presbyterian Church
- 1850 - First Methodist Church
- 1850 - First Baptist Church
- 1851 - Methodist Church South (now St. Paul's)
- 1861 - Trinity Episcopal Church
- 1861 - Society of Friends
- 1861 - Jewish Synagogue
- 1861 - German Methodist
- 1867 - Unity Society (In 1888 it became the Unitarian Church)

The above dates disclose that the Society of Friends conducted religious services more than a decade before the Congregational Church (1875), St. Patrick's Catholic Church (1872) and a long list of other churches, were established which now exist in our community.

FIRST QUAKER MEETING IN SAN JOSE

In the history of San Jose by McMurry and James, appears the statement that:

"The Coast's first Society of Friends (Quakers) was formed here in 1861 by Jesse and David Hobson and met in members' homes."

A fuller account of the early activities of Friends is found in "History of Santa Clara County, California" by Munro-Fraser, published in 1881. The following is Munro-Fraser's account:

"*The Society of Friends.* The first religious meeting of the Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers, was held in the 6th month (June) 1866, in the building at the corner of 9th and St. John Streets, it being founded by Jesse and David Hobson, who were the original promoters of the organization in San Jose, and with some others donated the land on which to construct the Meeting-house. In the year 1873, those Meetings were regularly organized under the authority and discipline of the Iowa Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, the first clerks being Jesse and Susan Hobson, who were appointed February 13th of that year. James Canney, now a resident of this vicinity, was next chosen on March 13th, and served until August 8, 1878, Elvira J. Ward being joint clerk with him, an office she still holds. On Mr. Canney's resignation John Bell was appointed and still holds



the office. The first Elder was Stephen Hobson; the present ones are James Canney, Elvira J. Ward and Margaret J. Gregory. The overseers at present in office are John Bell, Jesse Bowersock, Amanda M. Taylor, and E. E. Morris, Mr. Bell being also clerk of Monthly Meeting and Keeper of Records. Jane M. F. Canney and Adonijah Gregory have been and are the only regularly organized (ordained?) Ministers. The Society numbers sixty-five members; religious meetings are held on the first and fifth days (Sunday and Thursday) of each week at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and first-day (Sabbath) school at 11:00 A.M., while the Monthly Meetings for the transaction of business and discipline of the Church, convene on the second fifth-day (Thursday) of each month."

The difference in the dates in the McMurry-James history on the one hand, and the Munro-Fraser history on the other, is due to the fact that McMurry-James refers to Meetings in the homes of Friends, whereas Munro-Fraser refers to the time that the Friends first erected their own Church edifice, at 9th and St. John Streets.

It is interesting to note that the Hobsons (leaders in the earliest activities of the Society of Friends in San Jose) were a part of the Quaker migration from Yadkin County, North Carolina. From Yadkin County, Guilford County and other surrounding communities came the extensive migration of Quakers to the West, passing through Cumberland Gap. Most of them stayed in Indiana and Ohio, but some came clear on through to the Pacific coast.

The records in the office of the County Recorder of Santa Clara County show that on February 2, 1867, a lot 80 by 80 feet at the north corner of 9th and St. John Streets was deeded to the seven following individuals as "Trustees for the Society of Friends", namely:

- Jesse Hobson
- John Barker
- David Hobson
- William C. Ables
- David I. Hobson
- Thomas Henry Knowles
- Stephen Thorne

This property was held by the Society of Friends until 1883, when it was conveyed on "the 6th day of the 12th month" 1883, to be occupied by and become the property of the Free Methodist Church.

STOCKTON AVENUE MEETING

Having sold their property, the above group acquired property the following year on Stockton Avenue, which came to be known as "The Stockton Avenue Meeting", and continued to be used as a Friends Meeting House until 1924.

The deed by which the Stockton Avenue property was acquired is dated November 21, 1884, and was executed by John Henry Pieper to seven trustees "in trust for the San Jose Society of Friends". The trustees were Moses Mendenhall, Benjamin H. Jones, James Canney, William E. Ward, James Bean, George N. Jones, and David Hobson.

The San Jose Society of Friends on June 27, 1922, conveyed the Stockton Avenue property to California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church.

The property was finally sold by the California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church on April 18, 1924, to Swan and Anna Erickson, and thereupon ceased to be used as a Meeting House. The property was subsequently acquired by Charles Griffel and is now used by Mr. Griffel as a shop for repairing furniture.

The following is information furnished by Mrs. Otha Thomas, partly from the records of the California Yearly Meeting and partly from her own recollection:

From the preface of minutes of California Yearly Meeting of Friends Church in 1895, is the following:

"The first regularly established Meeting (in California) was held at San Jose. William Hobson and his brothers with some other Friends had located there, and a Monthly Meeting was established about 1873, subordinate to Honey Creek Monthly Meeting, Iowa. This Monthly Meeting has not had a continuous existence but was laid down about 1885.

"The only two names mentioned in the 1895 minutes from San Jose are William E. Ward and Amanda Taylor. Members reported 105.

"In 1896 the San Jose Monthly Meeting (Stockton Avenue Meeting) reported 93 members. There were three Ministers, one being female and two males (no names given). Also there were 3 members of the congregation who were reported as using tobacco!

"In 1897 three Ministers as listed in the San Jose Monthly Meeting (Stockton Avenue) were William Butler, Jane Canney, and Benjamin S. Coppick (no record of which was the Pastor).

"In 1898 under names of Ministers, the following are given: Benjamin S. Coppick, conducts services morning and evening; William Butler, preaches at San Jose occasionally—also at out points; Jane W. F. Canney, age 81, not able for service.

"In 1899 under names of Ministers, the following are given: William H. Butler preaches occasionally; Jane Canney not able for service; Benjamin Coppick absent from State for 8 months.

"In 1899 minutes, in his report as Evangelistic Superintendent of California Yearly Meeting, Levi Gregory says, 'I have arranged to go with my family to this field of labor (San Jose) immediately after Yearly Meeting.'

Here are the pastors as given in the Yearly Meeting minutes:

1899 to 1905, Levi Gregory
 1905 to 1908, Caroline Hunnicut
 1908 to 1909, Joseph Peele
 1909 to 1910, John Foster
 1911 to 1912, Della Gallahorn
 1912 to 1913, Clarence G. Fassett
 1913 to 1914, Emma Coffin
 1914 to 1915, Olive E. Guyer, wife of Harry Bean
 1915 to 1920, Otha Thomas

In 1921 Otha Thomas was acting Pastor. Because of the fewness of Friends, the Yearly Meeting began contemplating the sale of the property on Stockton Avenue.

In 1922 Mahlon Perry, former Yearly Meeting Superintendent, came to San Jose to make a supreme effort to hold together the San Jose Monthly Meeting of Friends, but he was killed shortly afterwards in an auto accident. Laura P. Townsend pastored the little flock after Mahlon Perry's death.

In 1923, Ernest Gregory, son of Levi Gregory, was sent by the Yearly Meeting to act as pastor and complete the sale of property.

The highest membership reported was when Levi Gregory was pastor, membership 134.

Otha Thomas was recognized and recorded as a Minister in 1899, 50 years ago, when Levi Gregory was the Pastor.

COLLEGE PARK ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS

A second and separate Friends Meeting was organized about the middle of the 80's—some 65 years ago—and has functioned continuously since its establishment. This Meeting is referred to as the College Park Meeting, or the Morse Street Meeting. Its founders were Joel and Hannah Bean, who came to College Park in June, 1883.

The land for the Meeting House was donated by James Bean, brother of Joel Bean. The deed to the Meeting House is dated "the 17th day first month, 1890", and executed by James Bean to George N. Jones, Abner Allen, George Hammond, Samuel I. Brun, Charles E. Cox, as Trustees of the College Park Association of Friends. The deed recites that the property was conveyed in order to secure the College Park Association of Friends a meeting house for "holding Meetings of Divine worship according to the principles of Christianity and practice of the Society of Friends as held and practiced by George Fox, Robert Barclay, William Penn, John Woolman and Stephen Girlett."

The Meeting House itself was erected five years before the deed. A photograph hanging on the dining room wall, showing the "Davis Tract" Sunday School, was taken in December, 1885.

From George Albert Bean (familiarly known as Bert Bean), son of James Bean, there have been gathered facts about the arrival in San Jose of the families of Joel Bean and James Bean. Both families came out from Iowa in June, 1883. Before coming, James Bean had bought the house on Chapman Street which was to become the Joel Bean home. The purchase had been arranged by correspondence with John Bell. Both families came out west together, and both families lived in the same house. At that time the rooms on the north, which later were to be occupied by "Grandma Great" (mother of Joel and James Bean) had not been added on. It can easily be imagined, therefore, how crowded the families were. James Bean soon bought the Saunders house on The Alameda, a short distance north of Newhall Street, which remained his family home as long as he lived.

When Joel and James Bean first came to San Jose they attended the Meeting at 9th and St. John Streets. Bert Bean well remembers Jesse and David Hobson, founders of this 9th Street Meeting. Members of what were afterwards to be the Stockton Avenue group and the College Park group, were related by marriage, as Jane Canney (wife of

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James Canney) was the aunt of Roanna Bean, wife of James Bean and mother of Bert Bean. Even in these early years, however, had begun the schism which led to the breaking up of the 9th Street Meeting into two separate groups. As Bert Bean puts it, "Joel was fired from the Iowa Meeting".

Today it is difficult to imagine the feeling (Bert Bean calls it "bitter" feeling) which was to exist between the two groups. Elvira Ward is quoted as saying: "We don't recognize them (Joel Bean group) as Friends." The Joel Bean group in turn came to look upon the Stockton Avenue Meeting, with its ministers, as unorthodox.

The immediate result of the rift was that the Joel Bean group (afterwards to be called the College Park group) held its Meetings in Rutherford Hall, located at the south west corner of 2nd and San Antonio Streets, that is to say, diagonally across the street from the Baptist Church, and directly across 2nd Street from the Young Women's Christian Association. Meetings were held on the second floor in a lodge room used by the Masonic Lodge.

The first floor of this building was a saloon. This prompted James Bean to burst into verse:

"There are spirits above and spirits below,
There are spirits of love and spirits of woe.
The spirits above are the spirits of love,
And the spirits below are the spirits of woe."

The Joel Bean group met in Rutherford Hall for a little over a year. The Meetings there began in February 1884, but only a little more than a year later this group erected the College Park Meeting House. These dates are ascertained from the entries in the diary of Joel Bean, now in possession of his daughter, Catherine Bean Cox, residing in Honolulu. These entries are as follows:

Thurs. Feb. 21, 1884

Began holding meeting in Rutherford Hall cor. 2nd & San Antonio Sts.

Tues. Mar. 17, 1885

Jas. B. & I bought lumber for Meeting House.

Thurs. Mar. 19, 1885

Carpenters began work on the Meeting House—Johnson and Melville Ward.

Fri. Mar. 20, 1885

The frame was raised.

Tues. Mar. 31, 1885

Melville Ward began to paint Meeting House outside.

Fri. April 3, 1885

The Meeting House was plastered first coat by S. L. Weaver.

Sat. April 25, 1885

Finished the Meeting House.

Sun. April 26, 1885

First meeting in the Meeting House.

The fundamental difference between the Stockton Avenue group and the College Park Group lay in the fact that Joel and Hannah Bean and the College Park Friends preferred the conservative or non-pastoral Meeting, whereas the Stockton Avenue Meeting was the pastoral type.

Otha Thomas says that on various occasions she was instrumental in bringing together Joel Bean of the College Park group and William Ward of the Stockton Avenue group, but that Joel Bean and associates of College Park remained committed to the non-pastoral Meeting.

Application was then made by the College Park

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group to Honey Creek Monthly Meeting, Iowa, to have the College Park Meeting set up or organized by the Honey Creek Monthly Meeting. The application was denied. The reason that this application was not granted is set forth in Elbert Russell's "The History of Quakerism." The following is quoted from this history:

"In 1885 San Jose Monthly Meeting in California was laid down by Honeycreek Quarter (Iowa) on the ground that 'the governing part of that monthly meeting is not sound in the doctrines of the Christian religion'. In 1890 Iowa Yearly Meeting revised its Discipline, inserting in it a list of questions for all nominees for ministers and elders to answer. Some of these questions represented crude and extreme theological positions. Taking advantage of these questions Honeycreek Quarter in 1892-93 dealt with Joel and Hannah Bean of San Jose for alleged un-soundness, and when they did not give satisfactory answers to the questions submitted, they were disowned. These events shocked and alarmed the more conservative Friends not only in Philadelphia and London yearly meetings but also in many of the American Gurneyite yearly meetings."

Note 11—"Together with other sympathetic Friends they (Joel and Hannah Bean) afterward organized the College Park Association of Friends which was the pioneer of a number of independent meetings, chiefly composed of Friends liberal in theology and devoted to 'silent' worship in the midst of Evangelical and 'pastoral' yearly meetings."

Note 12—"Honeycreek Monthly Meeting rescinded its action in 1899 and restored Joel and Hannah Bean to membership."

The College Park Meeting was set up as an "Independent Meeting". However, the true spirit of Joel and Hannah Bean and their conception of College Park Meeting as a "United Meeting" rather than an "Independent Meeting" is beautifully set forth in a letter from their granddaughter, Catherine Cox Miles. She writes:

"In speaking of College Park Meeting my grandparents, Joel and Hannah Bean, often referred to the sincere seeking for spiritual and Friendly unity and the deep sense of Christian faith that had motivated the little group that met there. They thought of the Meeting as "united" rather than "independent", as its members in the beginning all held memberships in some one of the recognized Yearly Meetings and had no wish to sever these connections. . . . Professor Augustus Murray in a Memoir of Joel Bean in the British Annual Monitor for 1915 wrote: 'There was no separation from the main body; the setting up of the Meeting was due to the exigencies of the situation, and membership in it has never meant the severing of previous connexion with any Yearly Meeting or Particular Meeting.'

"The Friends who first met to form the College Park Meeting were a group from two or three Yearly Meetings who held to the traditional principles and practices of Friends at a time when the formulations in the Western Yearly Meetings leading to the Richmond Declaration of Faith and the pastoral system were developing a new kind of Quaker belief and type of worship in the West.

"The Western Yearly Meetings with their new beliefs could not accept the traditional point of view of their more conservative members and were unwilling to retain them in membership. Some of these conservative Friends formed their own Yearly Meetings . . . others, who having retained their membership in Iowa, were dropped when the changes developed.

"The little College Park Meeting was thus started as a place of worship but not at first as a separate organization, and it was continued in a spirit of loyalty and devotion to the older Quaker Faith and Practice. . . . Those who had gone through the experience of disunion often spoke in the early days of their appreciation of the warm spirit of Friendly harmony in College Park.

"The Honey Creek Friends in San Jose like other Iowa Meetings included at one time Friends of both points of

view. Those who lived in College Park and preferred the old manner of worship held their Meetings in the College Park Meeting House beginning sometime in the 1880's. The downtown San Jose Meeting was eventually laid down. The pastoral Friends transferred their membership to California Yearly Meeting . . . and built a church on Stockton Ave. . . . In earlier years the differences in doctrine seemed very important to some . . . Mrs. Thomas will remember this period especially. Probably no single Yearly Meeting could or would in the early days have been able to accept under its care a mixed Meeting like College Park that included in its membership representatives from all the various Branches of Quakerism . . . So the little Meeting continued to be independent of any single Yearly Meeting, though including members attached to many.

". . . this little Meeting was the first to bring together Friends of the older tradition, in principles and worship, from all Branches, a pattern much later developed in a number of communities. As the Meeting grew it eventually took in members who had no other Yearly Meeting affiliation and so eventually became an independent Meeting in that sense."

This little Meeting house, which was described by August Murray as a "touch of old New England" has many associations connected with it.

Here at the very beginning of its history, a Sunday School was conducted open to all the children of this western addition to San Jose. The picture hanging on the wall in the dining room shows the Sunday School pupils in December, 1885.

Here Tong Sing Kow, later known as the "Chinese Quaker", attended services. In those days he was a student at the College of the Pacific and lived in the home of George and Wilhelmina Jones.

This Meeting House witnessed a number of Quaker marriages, including the following:

Isaac M. Cox and Catherine E. Bean, a daughter of Joel and Hannah Bean, May, 1891;

Andrew Erskine and Hannah R. Clark, January 30, 1901; (Vol. N of Marriage Certificates, p. 451)

William B. Watson and Laura Jenkins, June 16, 1904; Prof. Joseph Burt-Davy, of the University of California, and Miss Bolton, of Palo Alto;

Alfred C. Elkington and Anna L. Willits, September 2, 1922; (Vol. C of Marriage Certificates, p. 526)

Howard H. Brinton and Anna S. Cox, July 23, 1921; (Vol. R-1, of Marriage Certificates, p. 1069)

James Douglas McPherson and Pearl Emily Willson, August 25, 1923; (Vol. 7 of Marriage Certificates, p. 1069)

Walter Miles and Catherine M. Cox, September 9, 1927; (Vol. 17 of Marriage Certificates, p. 115)

In the earlier days there was a mid-week Meeting. This mid-week Meeting was held on Wednesday.

This Meeting has been visited over the years by many prominent Friends, not only from all parts of the East but from England also.

The families of Samuel Brun and Paul Brun, who worshiped here, were French Quakers.

On rare occasions George Jones, who was very fond of music and had a soft and melodious voice, would rise in Meeting and sing some verse that gave expression to the thought and sentiment within him.

In the early days there was no dining room, nor front vestibule, in the Meeting House. However, the dining room was in existence in 1906 when, due to the earthquake, my parents, my brother and I moved in mattresses and bedding and slept on the

floor until the foundation of the house in which we lived could be braced. Likewise, in the earlier days, a long stable or carriage shed was built along the rear of the lot, which housed the horses and buggies of members who drove to Meeting. With the advent of the automobile, this horse shed was removed. It was erected, and later torn down, by the cooperative work of the men of the Meeting. Today it would be called a "work project".

No story of this Meeting House is complete without mention of "Old Ted". Ted was a large white work-horse of advanced age, well-fed and well-rounded. Speed was not one of his accomplishments. With his characteristic jog-trot he bounced up and down as much as he travelled forward. He was owned by Charles Cox who used him on a light spring wagon and for orchard work, on a prune orchard near Campbell. Old Ted also did service as a carriage horse, conveying the Joel Bean family, and the Charles Cox family, to San Jose. Particularly, however, he did service on Sunday in conveying "Grandma Great", mother of Joel and James Bean, and others of the Joel Bean family to Meeting. On occasion when friends were visiting Joel and Hannah Bean, Ted made two and three trips to the Meeting House, depositing the passengers at the old carriage steps in front of the Meeting.

It should also be narrated, lest the impression be given that the Quaker children were angelic, that sometimes the younger generation sneaked over to the Meeting House before the elders arrived for morning services, and plugged the key hole with gum!

Thus the little Meeting House has stood through the years. At first it was surrounded by fields of grain. In the spring it witnessed the sprouting of the tender young shoots of barley; in summer it gazed upon the surrounding fields of hay-cocks; in the fall it was surrounded by the brown California stubble. As the years have passed, the fields have been subdivided into lots, until now it is surrounded by homes. Only three weeks ago, on October 15th, the Meeting House yielded to the march of progress. It then had electric lights and an electric heater installed in the dining room. This is to accommodate the children of the Day Nursery which, in September of this year, was established by Ruth Krienkamp. This Nursery School is a service deeply appreciated by families with little children living in the neighborhood. The Meeting House, instead of standing idle during the week, is thus put to most appropriate use, and Ruth Krienkamp is following in the footsteps of Hannah Bean who conducted here the Sunday School over sixty years ago.

Daniel Webster's sentiments toward his Alma Mater, Dartmouth, apply to our little Meeting: "It is small but there are those who love it". The history of an institution or a nation is said to be the elongated shadow of a man. The College Park Meeting truly is the elongated shadow of Joel and Hannah Bean. Through the years this little Meeting has radiated their buoyant, kindly personality. Though the Meeting is small in numbers, it has exerted an influence far beyond its size.